

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 120

By Crowe

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Matti “Matt” Laitinen of Johnson City.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Matti “Matt” Laitinen; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Laitinen was an exemplary public servant and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, Matt Laitinen served a number of private and public concerns with acumen and alacrity as an electrical engineer, earning the respect of his peers and superiors alike for the exemplary quality of his work; and

WHEREAS, a native of Mikkeli, Finland, Mr. Laitinen was the son of the late Henrik and Ida Laitinen; and

WHEREAS, from an early age, he wanted to live in the United States, and while he would eventually realize this dream, events and circumstances would conspire to keep him in Scandinavia for a while; and

WHEREAS, Matt Laitinen rendered sterling service to the country of his birth as a member of the Finnish Army during the Continuation War with the Soviet Union; Finland hoped to repatriate areas that had been conquered during a previous conflict with the Soviets, and many young Finns like Mr. Laitinen risked their lives when their nation called on them; and

WHEREAS, after his service in the Continuation War, Mr. Laitinen earned his masters degree in Electrical Engineering from Helsinki University of Technology; and

WHEREAS, his degree in hand, Matt Laitinen secured a position in Sweden, where he met his wife-to-be, Ingrid; he also found the help he needed in realizing his dream of emigrating to the United States; and

WHEREAS, former Ohio Governor James M. Cox agreed to sponsor Mr. Laitinen, offering him a job with WHIO, a television station Mr. Cox owned in Dayton; and

WHEREAS, with his beloved Ingrid, Matt Laitinen moved to the Midwest, assumed the position he was so generously offered, and remained there for a number of years until another employment offer, this one from National Cash Register (NCR), prompted him to leave Mr. Cox's television station; and

WHEREAS, well educated and becoming increasingly experienced as well, Mr. Laitinen moved his growing family to Galion, Ohio, to take a position with North Electric Company (NEC, later ITT North); and

WHEREAS, NEC transferred Matt Laitinen in 1970 to its facility in Johnson City; and

WHEREAS, after roughly ten years at ITT North in Johnson City, Mr. Laitinen received an offer to work at the James H. Quillen College of Medicine at East Tennessee State University, where he remained until his retirement; and

WHEREAS, Matt Laitinen displayed his characteristic drive and determination in a number of pursuits; his love for tennis led him to win city championships in Galion and several age group titles in Johnson City; and

WHEREAS, the United States Tennis Association placed Mr. Laitinen high in both the Tennessee and Southeastern U.S. regional rankings; and

WHEREAS, his passion for tennis was surpassed only by his love for running, and Mr. Laitinen traveled as far as his native Finland to compete in a race; and

WHEREAS, he won numerous age-group titles in both the 5K and 10K distances. Mr. Laitinen even set four age-group records for the 10K road run in Tennessee, and these records still remain intact twenty-five years later; and

WHEREAS, at the ripe age of sixty, Matt Laitinen completed the Helsinki Marathon in three hours and five minutes, a remarkable feat for a man of any age; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Laitinen was an active and devout member of Our Savior Lutheran Church, which he served faithfully; and

WHEREAS, Matt Laitinen was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Laitinen enjoyed the loving companionship of his wife Ingrid, who, along with his parents and his brother, Veijo Laitinen, preceded him in death; and

WHEREAS, he is survived by two sons and their wives, Carl and Elizabeth D. Laitinen and Anders and Leighta M. Laitinen; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Laitinen will also be sorely missed by his four grandchildren, Carl Matthew Laitinen, Jr., George Anders Laitinen, William Erick Laitinen, and Niklas Anders Laitinen; and

WHEREAS, Matt Laitinen leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Matti "Matt" Laitinen, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Laitinen.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.